

Life as a child during the Second World War

This activity uses people's personal stories to explore what it was like to be a child in Cardiff during the Second World War, and what it was like to be evacuated*.

Life changed for everyone during the Second World War. Life was certainly different for children, with blackouts, parents often away and evacuation.*

During the war, almost everyone left school at 14 and most went straight into fulltime work. At 18 you were called up - boys to the armed forces, girls to important war work such as the Women's Auxiliary Air Force.



School life was affected by the war too. Air raids, and at times bomb damage meant pupils had to share schools, sometimes in shifts. Every child had to have a gas mask with them at all times to keep them safe in case of any attacks.

The Second World War started in 1939 and ended in 1945

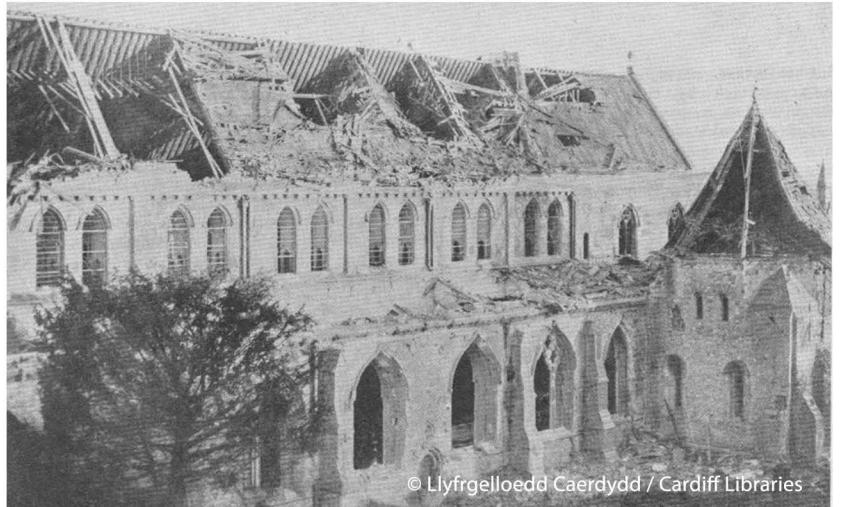
'The Blitz' is the name for the German bombing attack against the UK during the Second World War. The word 'Blitz' comes from the German word for lightning.

Towns and cities were targets for bombing, so lots of children were evacuated and sent to live with families in safer areas.

Why was Cardiff a target during the Second World War?

Cardiff was a target for bombing during the Second World War because it was a port* city. Important things like food and munitions* for the war were sent to and from Cardiff docks.

Other UK port cities during the Second World War include: London, Liverpool and Southampton.



Llandaff Cathedral in Cardiff was badly damaged by the explosion of a parachute mine in the churchyard.

Cardiff Blitz

The first German bombing attack on Cardiff happened in 1940. The biggest attack happened on the 2nd January 1941 when many people were killed or injured. There was serious damage to streets in Grangetown, Riverside and Llandaff Cathedral.

During the war, Cardiff had 575 red alerts. These sounded when enemy planes were overhead.

Glossary words*

- **Evacuee / evacuated** - An evacuee is a person that is sent from a place because that place is dangerous. Children were evacuated during the Second World War to places like the countryside because their families thought they would be safer.
- **Munitions** - Weapons and equipment for the army.
- **Port** - A port is a place by the sea or river where ships can come and go.

Activity: Evacuee Stories

After Cardiff's Blitz in 1941, more children were evacuated, some only going as far as the South Wales Valleys, but others going overseas.

Joyce Pucknell and W.P. Clifford were evacuated as children during the Second World War.

Read their stories and answer the questions.



Evacuees from London in Pembrokeshire, Wales, 1940.

W.P. Clifford's story

"When I was 7 years of age, in 1941, the bombing in Cardiff was very intense. So my mother decided that my younger brother and I would be evacuated."

"We were evacuated to Abertridwr staying with the Nelmes family. I remember Mrs Nelmes baking her own bread and they kept chickens."

Mr Nelmes was a miner. They had two older children. I was very homesick."

Questions:

- How old was W.P. Clifford?
- Why did his mother decide he should be evacuated?
- Where did they end up?
- Who did they stay with?
- Did he enjoy it?
- How would you feel if you were being evacuated?

Pick three words to describe how you would feel.

Activity: Evacuee Stories

Joyce Pucknell's story

"I was evacuated from Cardiff to Penrhiwceiber, near Mountain Ash, when I was 9 years old. I went with my sister Muriel (age 11) and Gwyneth (age 4). I remember leaving from Queen Street station, and thinking that we would end up somewhere really exotic, like a farm. We were all very excited because it was an adventure."

"When we arrived we went to a church hall where all the local people came in and selected who they wanted. The teachers tried to keep us together, so we were some of the last to be chosen, because nobody wanted 3 children. We stayed with Mr and Mrs Paveltisch. Mr Paveltisch was a miner."

"I really enjoyed it but my sister, Muriel, complained. So my mother and father came to fetch us home. We were only there for about a month."

Questions:

- How old was Joyce?
- Where did she think they might go?
- How did she feel?
- Who was she evacuated with?
- Why were they the last ones to be chosen?
- What was the name of the family that eventually picked them?
- How long were they evacuated for?


Activity: What would you pack?

Imagine that you are growing up in Cardiff in the 1940s. You are being evacuated and can only pack a small amount of items to take with you.

What would you pack and what would you leave behind?

✓	<p>I would pack:</p> <p>I would take it because:</p>		<p>I would not pack:</p> <p>I would not take it because:</p>	✗
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The government recommended that in addition to their gas mask and identity card the evacuees had the following items:

<p>Boys: 2 vests 2 pairs of pants Pair of trousers 2 pairs of socks 6 handkerchiefs Pullover or jersey</p>		<p>Girls: Vest Pair of knickers Petticoat 2 pairs of stockings 6 handkerchiefs Slip Blouse Cardigan</p>
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Examples of some other things that they packed in their suitcase:

- Overcoat or mackintosh
- Dry biscuits
- Boots or shoes
- Comb
- Soap
- Plimsolls
- Pair of Wellington boots
- Facecloth
- Sandwiches
- Towels
- Toothbrush
- Packet of nuts / raisins